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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STOCKHOLM 000586

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SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN, IRAN, CAUCASUS AT THE SEPTEMBER GAERC

Classified By: Political Counselor Marc Koehler for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) Summary. Foreign Ministers will address Afghanistan and Pakistan (AfPak), Iran, and the South Caucasus at the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) September 14-15. AfPak talks will center on fleshing out the EU's new regional strategy, reaction to final election results, and a possible international conference. Iran discussions will address Tehran's response to the EU3 plus 3 proposal. The UN process must be exhausted before EU autonomous sanctions go on the table, and FM Bildt must be convinced that they will have the desired effect. Ministers will explore ways to move toward association agreements with Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Polcounselor and poloff obtained a readout from Magnus Scholdtz, head of the MFA's EU Correspondent's Office. End Summary.

AfPak

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¶2. (C) GAERC discussions of Afghanistan will focus on making the emerging EU AfPak strategy more concrete, working on the basis of inputs from both the European Commission and the "envoy club" of special representatives for AfPak that met last week. Swedish FM Bildt will try to get EU members to provide the 140 police officials still missing from the EUPOL quota. A full catalogue of EU contributions to Afghanistan requested by Bildt during the September 4-5 Gymnich, to be known as the "Blue Book" will not be ready until October. There mere act of compiling this text will "guilt" Member States into doing more, Scholdtz said. Bildt has emphasized the centrality of civilian efforts to success in Afghanistan, and Scholdz noted that for the Swedes, increasing the civilian component is key to gaining political support for increases in military personnel. Ministers will probably also discuss the final Afghan vote count due out just before the GAERC. A key topic will be what to do if President Karzai appears to win a first round victory but fraud allegations later erode his vote share to less than a majority. "How many motions is it worth going through (ie a second round of voting) if it is clear that Karzai will win in the end?" Scholdtz mused. The German/French/British proposal for an Afghanistan conference will also be discussed. Scholdtz remarked that the presidency was dismayed that the Prime Ministers had not informed them before publicly proposing the conference, but was somewhat comforted by the fact that these countries' FMs had not been informed either. Scholdtz hoped any conference would be held in Kabul and focus on shifting responsibility to Afghans, instead of repeating more "remote" conferences like the Bonn conference. Scholdtz also judged that any time that ministers could spare for Pakistan would be time well spent because discussion to date has been "sketchy and inconclusive." Time would definitely be set aside for Pakistan in the October GAERC.

Iran

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13. (C) Dinner discussion of Iran will center on how to respond to Tehran's counterproposal to the EU3 plus 3. The EU3 plus 3 are consulting today, and would present their ideas on Monday to the ministers. The reply, which skirts the most important issues, could nonetheless form the basis of productive meetings, FM Bildt thinks. Based on the response, the EU could possibly meet with Iran to stress the main principles of the original offer. If the Iranian response is insufficient, or if Russia and China appear firmly unwilling to impose further sanctions, discussion will turn to EU sanctions. Germany and France have already begun setting the stage for sanctions, but the UN route must be exhausted first. FM Bildt has requested data from the EU Situation Center to estimate the effect of sanctions. Bildt will not push for sanctions as a purely symbolic measure, Scholdtz explained. Bildt must be convinced that they will curb the nuclear development, and not simply provide a scapegoat for the regime that will help it consolidate power while allowing the Chinese and Russians to expand their trade with Iran at Europe's expense.

Caucasus

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14. (C) Ministers will address the possibility of authorizing the Commission to begin negotiating association agreements for Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. The ambition is to be inclusive of all three countries, while still differentiating between them based on their progress toward EU standards. At the same time, the outreach serves as a signal to Belarus

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that the EU's Eastern Partnership Program is a real opportunity to engage with Europe. The ultimate goal, deep free trade deals with Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, is still far off, particularly for Azerbaijan which is not even a WTO member. Discussion of the EU Monitoring Mission, if any, would likely center on ways to extend it to cover maritime claims. The Incident Reporting Mechanism could be extended to maritime incidents, for example. However, since the law of the sea differs greatly from ordinary law, maritime experts would have to be recruited.

BARZUN